

Islamic Politics at the Sub-regional Level in Dagestan: Tariqa Brotherhoods, Ethnicities, Localism and the Spiritual Board

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AS WAS SHOWN BY THE KARAMAKHI CONFLICT in 1999,¹ Dagestan has been the scene of one of the most fervent examples of Islamic revival in the world.² Even putting aside the geopolitical significance of the fact that this extremely pious region neighbours Chechnya and these two republics' religious and political situations influenced each other strongly at least until the beginning of the Second Chechen War in 1999,³ Islam in Dagestan cannot but attract scholarly interest. Dagestan is one of the rare territories in the world where the Shafii judicial school⁴ of Sunni survived, with the only exception of the Nogais, inhabiting the northern part of the republic, who practice the Hanafi school. In the territories of the former USSR the Shafii school is dominant only in Dagestan and Chechnya, while the other Sunni territories (Central Asia, the Volga–Ural region, Crimea and the Northwest Caucasus) follow the Hanafi school of law. The Shafii school, in particular in comparison with the Hanafi school, is characterised by the strict interpretation of sharia (divine law) in regard to the territorial solidarity of Muslims. For example, the Shafii school permits building a second Friday mosque (or Jami mosque, in which all Muslims of the settlement are expected to gather at Friday prayers) in a settlement only for inevitable reasons, for example, when the settlement has grown to the extent that it is impossible for one Friday mosque to seat all the Muslims in the settlement at Friday prayers.⁵ Therefore, the endless split of umma, observable in the Volga and Siberian regions of Russia, is theologically difficult in Dagestan.⁶ In many Muslim regions of the former USSR mosques have often been built by donors ('businessmen') and the state, with the result that mosques are rarely connected with settlements. In contrast, in Dagestan it is settlements (jamaats) which build and manage mosques, and pay salaries to imams. For the same reason, whilst in the other Sunni regions of the former USSR the Islamic principle of the rejection of professional clergy is interpreted quite 'flexibly' and the clergy (receiving salaries from the state in various hidden forms) has been transformed into something like a sub-division in charge of ideology of the presidential or executive organ of power, in Dagestan the non-professional principle of Muslim leaders is still viable.

These religious characteristics cannot but have political implications. In Dagestan religious elites at the republican (regional) level are unable to dictate to religious communities in terms of personnel policy but need to respect the imams elected by the communities or to recommend candidates for imams attractive to the communities. This democratic characteristic of Dagestani Islam makes the religious politics in this republic much more dynamic and intensive than in the other Muslim regions of the former USSR, where the post-communist 'revival of Islam' was initiated from above, by the state or donors. This is why we need to focus on Muslim politics at the sub-regional, even including community, levels in Dagestan and also on its interactions with republican religious politics.⁷

Islam in Dagestan has a strong tradition of Sufism. After the Salafites (so-called Wahhabis)⁸ were made illegal in Dagestan in the aftermath of the military conflict in August–September 1999, Islamic politics in the republic developed among traditional Sufi Muslims along four axes: (1) Said-Afandi Chirkeisky and his murids (disciples), the most influential tariqa brotherhood (see the next section) in Dagestan, versus other tariqa brotherhoods; (2) *Pro et contra* the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan (Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Dagestana, DUMD), whose leadership has been monopolised since 1992 by Said-Afandi Chirkeisky and his disciples, supported by Avars; (3) Avars, who dominate the DUMD, versus other ethnicities, in particular Kumyks. To an extent, this confrontation tracks the traditional rivalry between highlander Caucasians and lowlander Turks in modern Dagestan history; and (4) mountain and central *raiony* and cities of Dagestan, which accept the present DUMD leadership, and the opposition of the Kumyk-inhabited and southern territories of Dagestan.

As these four axes demonstrate, in Dagestan tariqa brotherhoods operate as if they were substitutes for political parties, representing clientelist, ethnic and local interests. This is unsurprising because the Islamic revival in extremely pious Dagestan generated an ideal type of Islamic politics based on the famous principle of indivisibility of social/material and spiritual life.⁹ In this sense, the Islamic revival in Dagestan has manifestly differed from that in the once completely secularised Tatarstan, where the problem of whether Islam should be placed at the centre of social and political life or whether Islam is only a component of the regenerated Tatar identity has constantly been an issue of public and theological debate.¹⁰ Once spiritual life is indivisible from political life, ethnic, social and local cleavages in society cannot but be transferred into religious (but not necessarily theological or canonic) rivalry, the organisational basis of which in Sufi-oriented Dagestan is tariqa brotherhoods. This implies that one can analyse the multinational/multiconfessional Dagestan society as a whole through the prism of interactions between tariqa brotherhoods.

After Catherine II, the Muslims incorporated into the Russian empire and the Soviet Union has been managed by institutions named spiritual boards, a semi-bureaucratic, monopolistic channel between the state and the Muslims.¹¹ The chief of this institution began to be called mufti, which in Arabic originally meant only the one who had the right to issue fatwa (judgments based on sharia). After the collapse of the Soviet Union this system diversified. On the one hand, Central Asian countries, Tatarstan and the Northwest Caucasian republics of Russia continue to resort to or have renewed Catherine II's principle of state Islamism. This state Islamism is

premised on having only one spiritual board in each country or federal constituent and these spiritual boards are very obedient to the secular authorities. Moreover, in many of these countries and republics the spiritual boards, de facto or de jure, began to appoint local and even mosque imams. At the other extreme, in the Volga and Siberian regions of Russia (such as Bashkortostan and Perm and Orenburg *oblasti*), spiritual boards split under the influence of the nationwide schism of umma between the traditional Central Spiritual Board under the leadership of Talgat Tadzhtudin and nationalist/regionalist Muslim leaders (who created the Council of Muftis in Moscow in 1996). The fragmented spiritual boards were transmuted into a kind of voluntary association which can be created, split and abolished.¹²

Struggles for hegemony over the DUMD might appear to demonstrate that Dagestan, having vacillated constantly between the single and plural principles of spiritual boards, seems to lie between state Islamism and pluralist voluntarism. But this impression is not correct. The statification of Islam and the endless split of spiritual boards are two sides of the same coin so that in these territories the 'revival of Islam' was an artificial phenomenon initiated from above. The development of Islamic politics in Dagestan, which allowed neither complete statification of Islam nor the emergence of an alternative Spiritual Board after the mid-1990s, is an alternative model to the post-Soviet 'revival of Islam' and therefore facilitates inter-regional comparison of Islam.

To sum up, this article attempts to analyse: first, interrelations between the regional, local and community levels of Islamic politics in Dagestan; second, relations between religious and secular politics in Dagestan in a comparative perspective; third, the multinational Dagestani society through the prism of rivalries and alliances of tariqa brotherhoods; and finally, the revival of Islam in Dagestan as an exception among the patterns of Islamic revival in the former USSR, focusing on the failure of the DUMD's attempt to obtain monopolistic religious hegemony over the republic.¹³

Further, we will explain what are tariqa brotherhoods, the main heroes of this article, overview the ethno-confessional situation in Dagestan, and the Dagestani secular authorities' attitude towards Islam. After these preliminary descriptions we will provide an ideal type of the domination exercised by the triad of Said-Afandi – DUMD – Avars, referring to the example of a typical mountain *raion* mainly inhabited by Avars, Untsukul'sk. Further, we will examine the opposition to the triad, focusing on religious politics in Southern Dagestan carried on by groups which do not accept the DUMD's leadership. Next, we will survey the rise and fall of the Salafite movement in Southern Dagestan, in particular in Belidzhi town, which was one of the epicentres of this movement during the second half of the 1990s. Finally, we will follow the crises the DUMD faced in 2004 since in these crises the critical issues of Islamic politics in Dagestan during 1992–2003 reappeared in a more intensive manner.

Actors: Tariqa brotherhoods

Tariqa is a key concept of Sufism, originating from a word meaning 'way' in Arabic. In early Sufism (the ninth–tenth centuries) tariqa meant the 'method' to achieve a certain spiritual condition (tariqa-method). After the rapid spread of Sufi institutions of 'teacher (sheikh, murshid, ustaz)—disciple (murid)' in the Muslim world during the

eleventh and twelfth centuries, *tariqa* began to mean these institutions as well (*tariqa*-orders). During this period *tariqa*-method was qualified to imply 'mythic methods of cognition of truth'.¹⁴ However, the worldwide expansion of Sufism has made classic overreaching orders, such as Naqshbandi, Shadhili and Qadiri, meaningless as political actors. For example, the Naqshbandi stretched from Gibraltar to Indonesia, allegedly with hundreds of thousands of disciples, but (unlike Christian orders such as the Franciscan and Dominican) without regular organisational connections among themselves, can hardly be seen as a unit of concrete political action. Instead, coherent collectives – brotherhoods composed of a sheikh and his disciples became the units of Sufi politics. In other words, the concept of *tariqa* has been shrunk to its original meaning, namely *tariqa*-method.

In Dagestan one may even observe a peculiar variation of this *tariqa*-method, which we might call *tariqa*-diploma. Sheikhs, as a rule, are not satisfied with their first *ijaza* (permission to organise one's own brotherhood and teach *tariqa*-method) but try to obtain a second one, often even by dubious means. This mentality reminds us of the practice of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, whose members regarded it as prestigious to have a second higher education qualification. As a result of this 'second higher education', for example, the leader of the ruling *tariqa* in Dagestan (Said-Afandi) and one of the visible oppositional figures (Siradzhudin Israfilov Khurikskii, the most influential sheikh in Southern Dagestan) share common *tariqa*, i.e. Naqshbandi and Shadhili, but this fact does not soften the conflict between them at all. Confrontations, intrigues and alliances among Muslim leaders in Dagestan have taken place between coherent collectives – brotherhoods¹⁵ (or their coalitions), but not between classic macro-orders.

The ethno-confessional situation in Dagestan

The Dagestani intelligentsia is often irritated by the fact that Russian scholarship starts the description of the Christian and Islamic histories of Russia from the conversions of Kievan Rus and the Volga Bulgar. As a matter of fact, Southern Dagestan accepted Christianity as early as the fourth century (under the influence of the Byzantine Empire) and Islam in the seventh–eighth centuries (because of the expansion of the Umayyad Caliphate), though it took almost eight centuries for Islam to penetrate Central and Mountain Dagestan to become the state religion of the feudal polities and the unions of village communities in these territories in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ Several specialists on Islam argue that Sufism began to penetrate Dagestan as early as the twelfth century, one proof of which is that the writings of Al-Ghazali, who systematised Sufism (see n. 4), were actively copied in Dagestan even when he was alive.¹⁷ The deeply rooted self-image of pious Muslims among Dagestanis was a reason why they rejected the Chechen warlords' call for the jihad against the 'kafir (non-believer)' Russian authorities in 1999. It was inconceivable for the Dagestanis to make a life-or-death decision dictated by Chechnya's 'superficial' Muslims.¹⁸

After the Caucasian War in the nineteenth century, Dagestani Muslims were subordinated to the jurisdiction of the Caucasian Spiritual Board in Tbilisi. After the cruel repression of Islam in the early Soviet period, the North Caucasian Spiritual Board was established in 1944 to mobilise the Muslims toward the Great Patriotic War.

Today, Dagestan is seething with Islamic revival. On 1 December 2004 1,766 mosques (among them 1,107 Friday mosques), 13 institutes of Islamic higher education with 43 local branches, 132 madrasah and 278 mosque primary schools were in operation in Dagestan. The total number of those studying Islam amounted to 14,000.¹⁹ The numbers of pilgrims to Mecca (hajj) was about 1,200 in 1991, 6,000 in 1992, 9,398 in 1995, 12,525 in 1996, 12,208 in 1997 and 13,268 in 1998.²⁰ Although the number of pilgrims began to decline after 1999 for political and practical reasons, Dagestan continues to send more than 5,000 pilgrims to Mecca each year, while (for example) Bashkortostan sends only tens of pilgrims.

In many cities and villages in Dagestan the *adham* (call to prayer), transmitted by powerful loudspeakers, compulsorily wakes up the population at about four o'clock every morning. Arabic is taught in elementary schools if the parents wish it. Not only religious leaders but also officials working at the Nationality Ministry and the Government Committee on Religious Affairs often read Arabic texts and are well grounded in Oriental studies (otherwise they would not have been able to debate with the Salafites). Even among village mosque imams one can easily find young people who studied Islam for several years in Arabic countries, while in the Volga regions those who finished three-year courses in madrasah often become imams. Almost all the interviews conducted by the authors of this article ended with the informants (irrespective of whether they were Salafites or Sufi, supporters or opponents of the DUMD) attempting to convert Matsuzato to Islam. Except for secularised Derbent City, in Dagestan it is very rare to see women wearing short skirts or trousers even during mid-summer. In rural areas almost all women wear traditional clothes.

Il'yas-khadzhi Il'yasov, one of the most influential Islamic leaders of Dagestan, an opponent of the DUMD and a leader of the Kumyk nationalist movement, attributes the fact that Muslims in Dagestan are devoted to Islam 'even more strongly than in Arab countries' to its tenacious Sufi tradition.²¹ Ironically, the mufti of Dagestan (i.e. Il'yasov's opponent), Akhmed-khadzhi Abdulaev, expresses a similar opinion: 'We should thank the Almighty ceaselessly for giving us such a pure Islam and such religious freedom as do not exist even in many Arabic and Muslim countries'.²² Makarov explains this extraordinary strength of Sufism in Dagestan by three factors.²³ First, the Dagestan population associates Sufism with the national liberation movement in the nineteenth century led by Imam Shamil' (1797–1871). In fact, during our research trip in Untsukul'sk *raion*, the birthplace of Shamil' (August 2003), we encountered a number of popular legends based on Shamil's life during the Caucasus War.²⁴ The second reason for the strength of Sufism in Dagestan was the physical elimination of Islamic intellectuals under Soviet rule. In this situation, only 'popular Islam' in the form of Sufism could transmit the Islamic tradition to the post-communist era. The third reason Makarov notes is that Sufi brotherhoods are firmly integrated into the clientelist tradition of Dagestan society.

The Dagestani population has been composed of three linguistic families. One is the Nakh-Dagestan branch of the North Caucasian family (hereafter we will call this group 'North Caucasians' for simplification). The branch of North Caucasians includes Avars (who compose 28.6% of the total population of the republic), Dargins (16.6%), Lezgins (12.3%) and Laks, Tabasarans and Chechens (approximately 5% each). The second linguistic family is the Turkic-speaking groups of the Altaic language family (hereafter

we will call this group 'Turkic' for simplification), who are represented in Dagestan by Kumyks—13.0%, Azerbaijanis—4.3%, Nogais—1.6% and Tatars—0.2%. The third, Indo-European, family is represented by Russians (5.6%) and other small populations of Ukrainians, Mountain Jews (or Tats) and Armenians.

Before 1917 the North Caucasians settled in the mountainous parts of Dagestan, while Turkic-speaking and Indo-European peoples lived in the foothills and plains. The policy of shifting highlander Caucasians to the plain lands, which was continuously pursued by the Soviet authorities during the 1920s–1970s, has shaped the present interethnic relations in Dagestan (see map, Figure 1). Because of the massive and

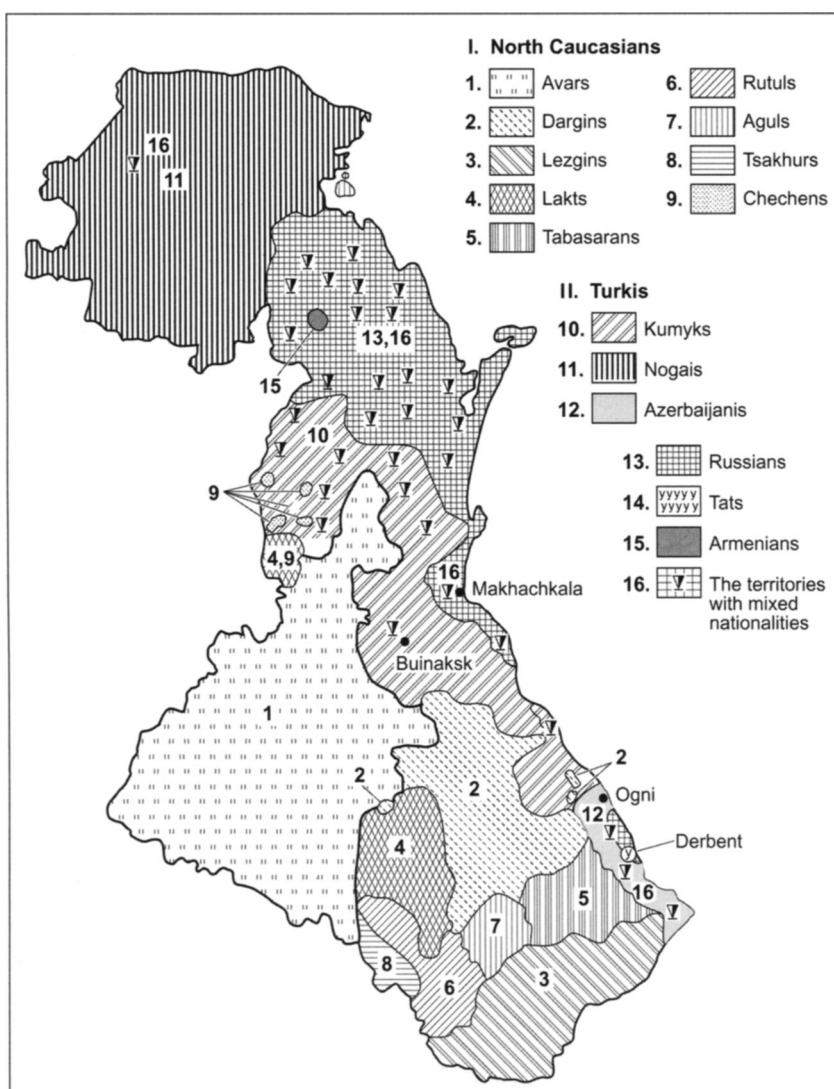


FIGURE 1. THE SETTLEMENT OF ETHNICITIES IN DAGESTAN

continuous immigration of highlander Caucasians, lowlander Turkic peoples have become 'minorities in what had been their own ethnic territories from time immemorial'.²⁵ This is particularly humiliating for Kumyks and Azerbaijanis, since they continue to regard themselves as 'more civilised' than highlander Caucasians. Until the 1920s the Kumyk and Azerbaijani languages were lingua franca for Central and Southern Dagestan respectively (Azerbaijani, to a significant extent, continues to be so for the South even now). As might be expected, there are a number of anecdotes among Kumyks making fun of the provincial behaviour of Avars and Dargins. The same situation can be found in Southern Dagestan. Azerbaijanis in Derbent city are anxious about the massive immigration of Lezgins and Tabasarans during the last few decades, significantly 'Sunnifying' this city, which has an ancient tradition of Shiism.

Avar, Dargin and Tabasaran polemicists emphasise the other side of the same coin. According to them, Turkic lowlanders had been secularised to a significant extent even before the 1917 revolution because of their active contacts with Russians. Turkic lowlanders were more vulnerable to Soviet atheist policy and modernisation than Avars, Dargins and Tabasarans living in remote mountains. And indeed, relatively more ulama (Islamic scholars) survived among the latter nationalities. It seems hypocritical to highlander Caucasians that the significantly secularised Kumyks and Azerbaijanis suddenly sought religious hegemony over Dagestan after the collapse of the communist official ideology.

Lezgins would seem to be exceptional among the highlander Caucasians since they were damaged by Soviet atheist policy more than any other ethnic group in Dagestan. At the same time, Lezgins are one of the most modernised ethnicities in Dagestan, as indicated, for example, by the spread of higher education.²⁶ As a result, a confessional (ideological) vacuum emerged in the Lezgin *raiony* after the collapse of communism. This is why the Salafites targeted Lezgins. At present, the DUMD, unable to compete with the local ulama in pious Tabasaran *raion*, is trying to penetrate the Lezgin *raiony*.²⁷ Among nationalities in Dagestan Tabasarans are characterised by the highest birth rate, as well as the highest level of unemployment.²⁸ Tabasarans often regard themselves as a deprived nation. This sense of deprivation takes on serious significance when they migrate to cities and form closed communities, which often turn into nurseries for both Salafites and radical Sufism.

The secular authorities' confessional bonapartism

Considering the complex religious situation in Dagestan, the secular authorities under the leadership of the State Council chairman Magomedali Magomedov have taken bonapartist attitudes to various religious forces. As early as 1991 the republican government introduced the Department for Religious Affairs, which would develop into the Government Committee on Religious Affairs in 1998. This organ, under the chairmanship of Akhmed Magomedov (a Dargin), has been noted for its bonapartist behaviour: between Salafites and traditional Islamists in 1998–99²⁹ and between the supporters and opponents of the DUMD.

During the period of struggle with 'Wahhabism' this committee introduced its own sub-regional organs. In May–June 1999, on the eve of the military conflicts, *raion/city* commissions 'on relations with religious associations and organisations and counter-

acting religious and political extremism', chaired by the *raion*/city chiefs or their deputies, were introduced. The representatives of *raion*/city organs of law enforcement, education and culture, as well as local religious leaders and intelligentsia, participated in these commissions. During the military conflicts these commissions were given responsibility for a number of extreme measures; for example, the commissions identified sympathisers with 'extremists' in their territories. In 2001 the chairman of the committee, Magomedov, remarked that the most important task of these sub-regional organs was 'ideological and educational' work: ensuring that the state registration of religious organisations was comprehensive, research on religious schools and universities, creation of a data bank of people who studied Islam abroad,³⁰ and 'prophylactic' measures against citizens sympathising with 'Wahhabism'. These tasks required close collaboration between secular and religious authorities. For example, the Untsukul'sk *raion* administration was praised for successfully mobilising ulama to give speeches to the mass media and communicate with the population.³¹

The introduction of local organs of the Government Committee on Religious Affairs paralleled the introduction of the DUMD local organs, namely *raion*/city imams (see below). However, this was not a symptom of state patronage of Islam, observable universally in the post-Soviet Muslim territories, but rather an organisational device to enable the secular authorities to manipulate various Muslim forces.

Saidism and its limits

In the following sections we will describe the attempts to centralise Islam in Dagestan. The initiator of these attempts is Said-Afandi Chirkeisky, sheikh of Shadhili and Naqshbandi tariqa and the universally acknowledged king maker, who dictates the appointment and removal of mufti of the DUMD. He was born in 1937 in an Avar village called Chirkei, in Buinaksk *raion*, where he continues to live. His first teacher of Islam was his father, whose early death deprived his seven-year-old son of any alternative but to become a herd boy. With an interruption for military service, Said continued to be a herdsman until he was almost 30 years old,³² an unlikely career for a 'young man of genius with mythical power' – though Said's biographers and image makers try to portray him as such to the population. At last, Said began to learn Shadhili tariqa and became a favourite of his teacher, who eventually gave Said the *ijaza* and even the *khirq*a (gown which symbolises the Sufi genealogy, meaning that the receiver is the most legitimate successor of the teacher).³³

Said-Afandi completed only seven years of secular education, and never studied Islam at the Bukhara Madrasah or Tashkent Islamic University, let alone in Damascus or Cairo. This is not a subject for shame for a Muslim leader of his generation, unless he is claiming to be a Muslim scholar with worldwide significance who has much deeper knowledge of Islam than any other sheikh in Dagestan. He has published only four books, three of which are written in verse; the only 'prose' he has published is a collection of his oral preaching written in a question-and-answer style to popularise the elementary principles of Sufi Islam.

In 1986 there was serious tension between Said-Afandi and another influential sheikh, Mukhammad-Amin Gadzhiev,³⁴ since Said-Afandi headhunted one of Mukhammad-Amin's disciples, Arslanali Gamzatov, a Kumyk.³⁵ Apparently, Said-

Afandi desperately needed a competent Kumyk disciple to widen his influence beyond the ethnic borders of the Avars. After only five years (1991) Gamzatov received the *ijaza* from Said-Afandi.³⁶ After the armed seizure of the DUMD by Avar militants in 1992 (see below), Gamzatov, who was only 36 years old then, was 'elected' as chairman of the Council of Ulama, a key institution on the DUMD. In 1993 he became rector of the Imam Saipully Kadi Islamic Institute (at present university) in Buinaksk city, the foundation of which was initiated by Said-Afandi.

The opponents of Said-Afandi criticise him for 'arrogance' and nationalism aimed at total Avarisation of Dagestan's Islamic institutions. It is amazing that Said-Afandi has been able to secure his disciples' unconditional loyalty, although he has a large number of disciples and can afford to devote only tens of minutes to each disciple personally, once or twice a year. Although this is common for other sheikhs to some extent, Said-Afandi seems to exert almost mythical powers of mind control.³⁷ It is very important for any sheikh to have disciples with a good secular education (not only religious education) and positions in secular institutions. However, Said-Afandi's 'cadre policy' is salient in this regard. He prefers to have young, educated disciples. He has built a solid network of disciples among government circles, and in law enforcement and security organs in particular.³⁸ An observer satirically likened Said-Afandi's selection of disciples to the 'cadre policy of the CPSU but without any quota for worker and peasant communists'.

In Dagestan the liberalisation of religious policy under *perestroika* intensified the ethno-clientelist characteristics of Sufi Islam. In January 1990 the DUMD split from the Spiritual Board of Northern Caucasus, which had been under the control of the CPSU. The first congress of Muslims of Dagestan elected a Kumyk as mufti. The nationalist movement in Dagestan during 1990–92 was characterised by a tendency to demand that Dagestan as a multiethnic republic be dismantled in order to create ethnic republics, such as Avarstan (combining the Avar territories of Dagestan and Chechnya), Kumykstan (covering lowland Dagestan) and Lezgistan (covering Southern Dagestan and part of Azerbaijan). During the last years of *perestroika* the regional CPSU leadership was controlled by Avars, whom the DUMD under the Kumyk mufti opposed. The leadership of the DUMD sympathised with the Kumyk nationalist organisation Tenglik, which sought the formation of Kumykstan.³⁹ Thus, there was a balance between the three main nationalities of Dagestan: the party and DUMD were controlled by Avars and Kumyks respectively, while the republican Supreme Soviet was chaired by Magomedali Magomedov, a Dargin. The collapse of the CPSU temporarily destroyed this balance to the disadvantage of Avars.

In February 1992, however, a group of armed Avars under the banner of the Islamic Democratic Party seized the building of the DUMD. These activists did not convene a congress of Muslims, the only legitimate organ to elect mufti; instead, the reshuffled Council of Ulama 'elected' the mufti. Since this incident the Congress of Muslims has never been convened in Dagestan and all five mufti elected since 1992 have been ethnic Avars. Once the legitimate, elected DUMD ceased to exist, ethnic and local groups began to establish their own spiritual boards on the basis of locality or ethnic identity: Kumyks as early as 25 April 1992, Dargins and Southern Dagestan in 1996 etc.⁴⁰ The Dagestan Law on 'Freedom of Conscience, Freedom of Religions and Religious Organisations', adopted on 30 December 1997, prohibited alternative spiritual boards,

as well as spiritual boards organised on ethnic criteria (Art. 10, cl. 6). This provision obviously contradicted Russian law and provoked a protest by the republic's procurator. Nevertheless, during the following years the ethnic and local spiritual boards of Muslims were liquidated and the pro-Avar DUMD remained as the only official organ of Dagestan Muslims. This event reveals a specific coalition between Dargin and Avar elites. Dargins controlled the republic's secular authorities but feared the Avars' attack on them, while Avar elites tried to consolidate their monopoly of religious authorities, exploiting Dargins' appeasement policy toward them. At the cost of democratic principles of religious life (which are incompatible with the endless postponement of the Congress of Muslims) and the interests of other nationalities, this coalition of the ruling nationalities has been secured.

Part of the background to the harsh battle over the religious authorities is the huge profits that control of the DUMD makes possible. For example, the monopoly of the tourist service for pilgrims to Mecca produces hundreds of thousands of US dollars each year. This 'pilgrimage monopoly' was strengthened each year and eventually, in 2004, private tourist companies were deprived of the possibility of obtaining visas for pilgrims. Ironically, the completion of the 'pilgrimage monopoly' produced unprecedented discontent among the population against the DUMD in 2004 (which we will examine in the last section of this article). The unimaginable scale of financial intrigues in which the DUMD was involved was partially testified to by the tragic death of mufti Seidmukhammad Abubakarov in August 1998 (he was blown up together with his brother and driver), although Avar nationalists tried to show that Abubakarov was a martyr killed by 'Wahhabis'.

To sum up, Said-Afandi's religious hegemony in Dagestan has been consolidated, first, by the coercive liquidation of the legitimate DUMD and the creation of the pro-Avar DUMD in 1992 and, second, by the prohibition of alternative spiritual boards in 1997. The third stage of this consolidation was the so-called 'struggle against Wahhabism' after the military conflict in 1999. Under this pretext, the DUMD tried to professionalise Muslim higher education by the establishment of the North Caucasian Islamic University and to introduce an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The professionalisation of Muslim education

In the aftermath of the military conflicts in 1999 the DUMD decided to establish an official Islamic university on the site of the Friday Mosque of Makhachkala, which would train religious cadres not only for Dagestan but also for the whole Northern Caucasus. In comparison with other existing Islamic universities, the North Caucasian Islamic University (Severo-Kavkazskii Islamskii universitet, SKIU), opened in January 2002, attaches special importance to secular education, such as Russian language and literature, history, psychology and economics. The SKIU encourages students to pursue secular education through correspondence courses offered by the secular universities of Makhachkala. The SKIU is trying to gain the status of ordinary (secular) institute of higher education, which will enable it to obtain financial support from the state and give its students the right to be exempted from military conscription. The buildings and dormitories of the university are ideal, equipped with computers and a gorgeous sports hall.⁴¹

Almost half of SKIU students are Avars, followed by Dargin and Lezgin students. Chechen students occupy fourth place, and only after Chechens are Kumyk students represented.⁴² This ethnic composition of students would seem to correspond to the DUMD–Avar national stereotypes: Dargins – opportunists in the antagonism between Avars and Kumyks; Lezgins – a bridgehead to Southern Dagestan; and Chechens – to fortify the area adjacent to Chechnya and as a bridge to expand DUMD influence to the whole Northern Caucasus.

The rector of the SKIU is mufti of Dagestan, A. Abdulaev. The managing officer (*upravlyayuschchii delami*) of the university is a young man born in 1980 and still a graduate student of Dagestan State University. Having demonstrated his brilliant command of Arabic and organisational skills in his work at the international department of the DUMD, this young man was appointed to his present position. Our talk with him and other young managers and lecturers at the SKIU left us with the impression that we had been talking with Komsomol leaders in the late socialist period, and indeed with the brightest ones. They do not show the rashness and ambition characteristic of ordinary youth, but just know their job and are doing it. It seems that they understand Islam, first of all, as a profession.

As early as 1989 Murtazali Karachayev, a future leader of the Kumyk nationalist movement and an uncompromising opponent of Said-Afandi,⁴³ founded the Imam Shafi'i Islamic Institute (now university, SIU). The SIU, the oldest of the Dagestani institutes for Islamic higher education, is in striking contrast to the SKIU. Supported by donations and the voluntary labour of imams and ulama from various parts of Dagestan, the SIU has a building and equipment that look far from ideal. The contents of the lectures are mainly religious matters and Arabic. About 30% of the graduates get jobs of a religious nature, such as being imams and teachers at madrasahs.⁴⁴ This percentage indicates that the education provided by the SIU is relatively effective (if we consider that the SIU is in opposition to the DUMD and this should make it difficult for its graduates to find religious positions), which in turn reveals the limit imposed on Said-Afandi's monopolisation policy. Despite the huge gap in resources, the SIU, relying upon donations and voluntary activities of believers, competes to an extent with the SKIU.

The making of an ecclesiastical hierarchy: Untsukul'sk raion

Under the pretext of the 'struggle against Wahhabism' the DUMD introduced an office named 'chairman of the *raion/city* councils of ulama and imams', who is also called *raion/city* imam or, more overtly, the representative of the DUMD. The DUMD appoints these *raion/city* imams, who chair the councils composed of the imams of village mosques, to discuss various problems in the secular and religious life of the territory and audit the activities of village mosque imams. If a *raion/city* is very weak from the religious point of view, the DUMD even dispatches an imam from another territory, although the DUMD emphasises that it considers the views of the ulama and imams of the territory. *Raion/city* imams, in turn, began to affect the selection of the village mosque imams.

While there are 42 administrative territories in Dagestan, five Kumyk-inhabited *raiony*⁴⁵ and 14 territories (12 *raiony* and two cities) in Southern Dagestan do not allow

these representatives of the DUMD to operate (see map, Figure 2). Therefore, the hierarchy exists in no more than 23 territories. An expert of the Dagestan Government Committee on Religious Affairs speculated that the hierarchy existed in 'only ten and a few more' territories.⁴⁶ Thus, ironically, the more Said-Afandi's DUMD was centralised and 'statified', the narrower the scope of its territorial influence became.

Being the birthplace of two renowned imams—leaders of the national liberation movement in the nineteenth century—Gazimagomed (1795–1832) and Shamil' (both born in Gimry village), Untsukul'sk *raion* is quite pious and abundant in 'social capital'. There are 12 rural houses of culture, the house of school pupils and several people's theatres. Many citizens are organised in folklore and sports circles, and

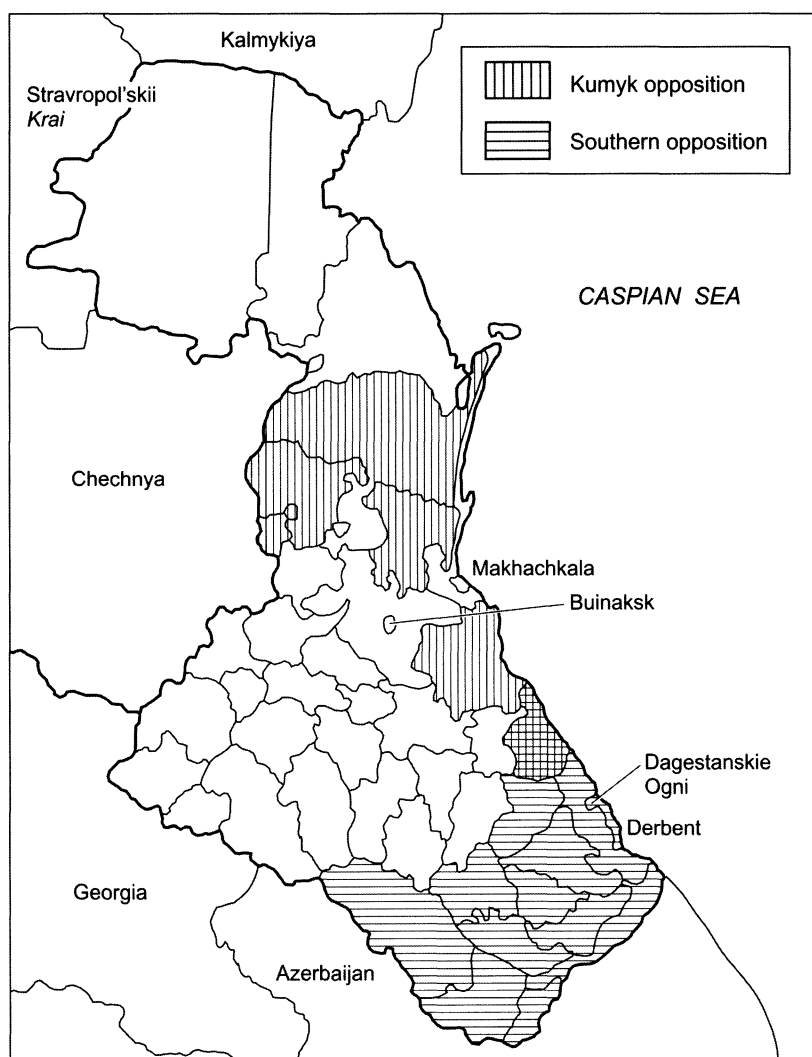


FIGURE 2. *RAIONY* OPPOSING THE DUMD

musical ensembles. As an important device of temperance policy the religious and secular authorities organise cultural and sports festivals in villages in turn.⁴⁷ Village imams preach in schools once a month. During the first half of 2003 the *raion* imam, Ramazan-khadzhi Gazimagomedov, a renowned Naqshbandi sheikh and also a 'member of the *raion* administration' (the former *raiispolkom*), organised three contests with monetary rewards: contests among kindergartens and schools concerning religious education and a Koran reading contest for school pupils and young people. Gazimagomedov is trying to progressively replace the old imams, who learned Islam only within the borders of Dagestan, with young people who often studied Islam abroad and 'have a broader view'.⁴⁸

The struggle against social problems in Untsukul'sk *raion* has not always been conducted using educational methods. For example, in Gimry village until a few years ago anyone found drunk in a public place was taken to the mosque and whipped.⁴⁹ The village council gives repeated polite warnings to the owner of a kiosk which sells wines and spirits. If the owner does not comply, pointing out that he has a state licence to sell alcohol, someone sets fire to the kiosk. After experiencing such arson twice, no one dares to sell wine in Gimry.⁵⁰

We asked Sheikh Gazimagomedov and the leaders of the *raion* administration whether the hierarchy of the DUMD, local and village imams contradicted the organisational principles of Islam. They answered that the relationship between the *raion* imams and the DUMD was 'consultative' and therefore the system functioning in Dagestan was different from (for example) the Catholic hierarchy. Gazimagomedov is trying to raise the income of village mosque imams. Not to violate the Islamic principle of the rejection of a professional clergy, the government of the republic pays additional salaries to the executive chiefs of the *raiony*/cities where this hierarchy exists, and the chiefs donate this additional sum to the *raion* imams, who in turn distribute the money among village imams. Similar hidden forms of salaries from the state to imams are widely observed in the post-Soviet Muslim territories, but this does not mean that the imams in the pro-DUMD territories of Dagestan have become an instrument of the secular authorities. It was obvious that Gazimagomedov's authority dominated the secular administration, though the religious and secular leaders of Untsukul'sk *raion* emphasised the cooperative relations between them. Gazimagomedov is critical of Il'yas-khadzhi Il'yasov, a leader of the Kymyk opposition to the DUMD, who politicises the ethno-confessional situation in Dagestan by criticising the Avar domination over the DUMD.⁵¹

The case of Untsukul'sk *raion* reveals that it is useless to anticipate the modern principle of the separation of the state and religion in such territories with ethnic and confessional homogeneity. At the same time, the almost ideal realisation of the triad of domination of Said-Afandi, Avars and DUMD does not imply the sterile bureaucratisation of religious life but rather promotes lively community activities and the presence of religious leaders enjoying genuine public respect.

Southern Dagestan as an opposition to the DUMD

We will now examine a territory which is oppositional to the Said-Afandi-DUMD hegemony – Southern Dagestan. In contrast to the territories controlled by the Kumyk

opposition, which are as homogeneous as Avar territories, the multiconfessional Southern Dagestan will show us another, perhaps more interesting, feature of religious politics.

Contemporary Derbent, the centre of South Dagestan, is not only the second city of the republic in terms of population and economic potential but also an extremely important border city, in which a huge number of law enforcement, security and border guard organs are concentrated. Recently, Derbent was recognised as a world heritage site by UNESCO, thus enjoying historical and cultural prestige. It was not by chance that this city has been a focus of competition among various religious groups throughout 1990–2004. Derbent is one of those rare places in the world where the border between two civilisations (in this case the Eurasian and Iranian) is visible—here in the form of the fortress and the Great Wall built by Sassanid Iran in the fifth–sixth centuries. Derbent is the place where the Caucasus Mountains come closest to the Caspian Sea. Therefore, in the past the city has often been called a ‘gate’ by its rulers,⁵² the fortification of which guaranteed defence from intrusions of Eurasian nomads.

Having been a typical contact zone, Southern Dagestan is distinguished by confessional variety and tolerance. Sunni, Shiism (mainly professed by Azerbaijanis), Judaism (professed by Mountain Jews or Tats) and Orthodox Christianity are practised there and theocratic and conformist forms of government, typical for homogeneously Sunni Mountain and Central Dagestan, do not work there. The Derbent Friday Mosque, founded in 1309, enjoys international prestige as one of the most ancient mosques in the world and has been managed by Sunnis and Shiites jointly, independent of the DUMD.⁵³ This mosque is a powerful stabilising force which prevents skirmishes between Said-Afandi and his opponents from being transferred from Central to Southern Dagestan. Another pivotal actor in religious life in South Dagestan is Siradzhudin Israfilov Khuriksky (b. 1955), sheikh of Naqshbandi tariqa, who lives in Khurik village in Tabasaran *raion*. Despite his opposition to Said-Afandi and persistence in seeking religious autonomy for Southern Dagestan, his behaviour is distinguished from that of the more aggressive Kumyk opposition.

Until Siradzhudin succeeded to the sheikh status of his late teacher sheikh in 1989 he had spent only one year studying official Islam in Tashkent (1984–85). Although he endeavoured to improve his scholarship during the 1990s, studying at the Shafii (Makhachkala) and Saipully Kadi (Buinaksk) Islamic Institutes, it is difficult to deny that Siradzhudin attracts people by his unique personality rather than by canonical knowledge. His brotherhood is distinguished by his disciples’ unconditional loyalty to him. There is a rumour in Derbent that some of his disciples drink the waste water after Siradzhudin has washed his body before prayer (*omovenie*).⁵⁴ He enjoys generous financial support from Turkey.⁵⁵

As mentioned above, Siradzhudin is a compromiser. Even after the Avars’ armed seizure of the DUMD in 1992 he continued to work as a member of the Council of Ulama until 2000. Although he tried to create his own Southern spiritual board in 1996, after the failure of this attempt he continued to work as the representative of the official DUMD in Southern Dagestan until 2000. He enjoyed normal relations with the late mufti Abubakarov (who was assassinated in 1998) because Abubakarov ‘did not intrude in the South’. While studying Islam at the oppositional, pro-Kumyk Shafii Islamic Institute and simultaneously opening a branch of this Institute in his own

home, Siradzhudin also entered the (pro-Said-Afandi) Saipully Kadi Islamic Institute and tried to build a good relationship with its rector, A. Gamzatov, Said-Afandi's disciple and the chairman of the Council of Ulama of Dagestan. Siradzhudin even began to say publicly that he had received the ijaza of Shadhili from Gamzatov, who, however, does not confirm it.⁵⁶

The fact that Siradzhudin passed the status of representative of the DUMD to Makhmud Piriev, A. Gamzatov's murid and the imam of 'the second Friday mosque' of Derbent (see below), was a significant landmark in the Avarisation of Islam in Southern Dagestan. Nevertheless, Siradzhudin boasts that the attempt by the DUMD to appoint its *raion/city* imams in Southern Dagestan ended in complete failure. Imams and executive chiefs in Southern Dagestan continue to consult him, even visiting the remote Khurik village.⁵⁷ Moreover, according to Siradzhudin, he continues to influence the selection of imams in Southern Dagestan since religious communities and executive chiefs consult him when imams are to be selected. On the other hand, A. Gamzatov, the chairman of the Council of Ulama, argues that Siradzhudin's popularity in Southern Dagestan and the DUMD compromise with it are only a temporary phenomenon. Both the North Caucasian and Saipully Kadi Islamic Universities are preparing young cadres from the South (mainly Lezgins) to progressively replace the imams who are under Siradzhudin's influence.

In what follows, we will analyse two instances of conflict between the supporters of Said-Afandi–DUMD and the Southern opposition to it (the split of the Derbent Friday Mosque and the Arafat incident) and consider two cases of Islamic politics at the community level. These case studies will reveal that the DUMD has a possibility to penetrate to Southern Dagestan, but the realisation of this possibility depends upon its interactions with religious communities.

The split in the Derbent Friday Mosque

The grandiose Friday Mosque in Derbent served as a reason for granting the city the status of a world heritage site. As already mentioned, this mosque functions as a symbol of religious tolerance in Southern Dagestan since Sunnis and Shiites use it jointly. The two religious communities have their own imam and akhund (the Shiah analogy of 'imam') respectively, but make up a common Council of the mosque and elect its common chairman, although Azerbaijani Shiites have served as such traditionally.⁵⁸

Because of the nationalist movements during the late *perestroika* period, Tabasaran Muslims (Sunnis) began to demand hegemony in managing the Friday Mosque and came into conflict with Azerbaijani Shiites. At the same time, because of the rivalry between two deputy imams of the Sunni community, the defeated deputy, Mavludin Netifov (Agul, b. 1956) was cast out from the Friday Mosque. Netifov, supported by a group of Tabasaran Sunnis, founded a new 'Friday mosque' at the site of the former veterinary hospital. This was almost a haram (breach of taboo) since pigs had been treated there. To build a new mosque, Netifov enjoyed the generous financial support of the international organisation 'Islamic Salvation',⁵⁹ which some years later would be accused of promoting 'Wahhabism' in Dagestan. Although Netifov's group called their mosque the 'second Friday mosque', the population called it the 'Tabasaran

mosque'. Being a representative of the Agul ethnic group, which was not influential in Derbent, Netifov paid attention to inter-ethnic balance in his management of the new mosque. Nevertheless, a group of Tabasaran parishioners began to criticise him for financial abuses. This resulted in the intervention of the city chief of internal affairs, Adilgirei Magomedtagirov (an Avar and future minister of internal affairs of Dagestan). Netifov abandoned the imamship of the 'second Friday mosque' of Derbent and became imam of the mosque in the neighbouring city, Dagestanskie Ogni.

The DUMD and Magomedtagirov decided to use the 'second Friday mosque' as a long-awaited outpost of the DUMD in the South. In 1995 the DUMD dispatched an Avar of Azerbaijani origin, Makhmud Piriev, who graduated from the Saipully Kadi (Said-Afandi's) Islamic Institute and had already been a murid of its rector A. Gamzatov, as its imam. A decisive reason for this selection was that Piriev knew one of the local languages, Azerbaijani. Thus the DUMD built its outpost in Southern Dagestan, exploiting the ethnic conflict between Azerbaijanis and Tabasarians and also personal rivalry within the Derbent Friday Mosque.⁶⁰

Though Piriev has increased the number of parishioners,⁶¹ our fieldwork among the parishioners of the 'second Friday mosque' revealed that Piriev had not earned parishioners' genuine respect during the ten years of his imamship. Some parishioners complained of suspicions of corruption, and others remarked that most of Piriev's preaching was no more than advertisement of his patron, Said-Afandi. In 2003 Piriev was even dismissed from his position temporarily because of parishioners' letters of complaint addressed to the republican government, though protection by Said-Afandi and Gamzatov enabled him to return to the position.

After 'Wahhabism' was made illegal in Dagestan in 1999, Salafite mosques were closed and official mosques in Derbent barred Salafites, who, somewhat strangely, began to gather at the Friday Mosque of the city. Many of them are marginalised youth working as merchants. They participate in five prayers, but do not listen to the imam's sermons. Instead, they defy and ridicule him, lying on the floor and chatting during sermons. When the prayers finish, they begin to sell books 'with Wahhabi nuances' in the square in front of the Friday Mosque and agitate for their faith on the streets.⁶² The tolerance of the Friday Mosque towards 'Wahhabis' provided Said-Afandi's supporters with a good reason to criticise this mosque and justify the split of Muslims in Derbent. Nevertheless, the chairman of the Council of the Friday Mosque argues that, if the Friday Mosque banishes 'Wahhabis', they will never admit that they were banished because they were 'Wahhabis' but will claim that it was a case of Shiites harassing Sunnis. This agitation might undermine the confessional tolerance in Derbent. Moreover, once the mosque presents itself as a Friday mosque, it does not have the right to reject any person who regards himself as a Muslim.⁶³

The DUMD used the desire of Derbent Sunnites for reunification and the imagined threat of Wahhabis in Southern Dagestan to seize the real Friday mosque. Under these pretexts the DUMD sought to appoint its representative as deputy imam (2003) and later imam (October 2004) of the Sunni community of the real Friday mosque. Before long, this imam appointed M. Piriev (imam of the 'second Friday mosque' and the most offensive supporter of Said-Afandi) as his deputy. This overtly politicised appointment caused a scuffle on 10 December 2004 between two groups of Muslims,

the supporters of the DUMD and the youth whom the DUMD regarded as Wahhabis.⁶⁴ As a result, the pro-DUMD imam was banished and the Sunnite community elected a representative of Agul ethnicity, who had studied Islam in Egypt, as the new imam.

The Arafat incident in 2001

In the mid-1990s a Lezgin family named Velikhan received permission from Derbent city administration to establish a religious organisation named 'Arafat' and develop a construction site in Gagarin Street to build a mosque. However, the Velikhans only laid the foundations, owing to insufficiency of financial resources, and the foundations lay unused for a while. In 1997 the city proposed to Sheikh Siradzhudin, the leader of the Southern opposition to the DUMD, that he finish the construction. Siradzhudin himself had a penchant for architecture. Largely funded by Turkish money, up to that point he had built several beautiful mosques in Southern Dagestan. By 2000 Siradzhudin had built a beautiful mosque in Gagarin Street. However, witnessing the influx of a huge sum of money, both the Velikhans and the city changed their attitude towards Siradzhudin. Thus an impasse emerged; Siradzhudin had spent money to build the mosque but could not establish legal title to the property, while the Velikhans continued to claim ownership of the site, on which they had hardly spent any money.⁶⁵ It is possible that this situation was created artificially to damage Siradzhudin's brotherhood.

Even without a solid legal status, Arafat was becoming a religious commune under the influence of Siradzhudin's brotherhood. In 1998 Arafat opened a branch of the (anti-DUMD) Shafii Islamic Institute. This was an important step since there had been no institute of Islamic higher education in Southern Dagestan because of the discriminatory DUMD policy. Students, pupils and parents began to live on the Arafat site and constructed outbuildings with their own hands. For example, they worked as labourers to pull down buildings and instead of wages they asked to salvage the stone for use in their own construction. Recognising the importance of Arafat, Siradzhudin sent his best disciple, Isamutdin Saidov (b. 1966),⁶⁶ as its imam. This was a difficult choice for the sheikh since Saidov was an influential religious leader of Khochni village, the capital of Tabasaran *raion*. Saidov's arrival in Derbent consolidated the triumph of Arafat. The number of students and pupils of the Islamic institute and madrasah reached 300; they came not only from Southern Dagestan but from the whole CIS.⁶⁷ The DUMD and Adilgirei Magomedtagirov (now the minister of internal affairs of Dagestan) were not ready to resign themselves to the idea that Sheikh Siradzhudin, an opponent of Said-Afandi and the DUMD, might have a solid base in the strategically important Derbent city.

At first, the DUMD–MIA of Dagestan tried to label Arafat as Wahhabi, since Wahhabism was already illegal in the republic. However, it was difficult to confuse the theological antipodes, Wahhabism and Sufism (although this propaganda was quite effective among ordinary citizens of Derbent). Therefore, the police began to prosecute Arafat for violating sanitary, construction and fire regulations. On 11 October 2001 a police detachment broke into Arafat and found a number of non-local minors of

school age living there unregistered. The police sent the minors by buses to their native villages, and detained the core members of Arafat for a while, but eventually released them. The core members returned to Arafat and staged a sit-in. During the night of 12–13 October they performed dhikr (endless repetition of the names of God or prayers, a crucial ritual for Sufism). On 13 October, early in the morning, the final police assault began. They beat women and children and detained almost all Arafat members, including children. This overt violation of human rights immediately provoked a republic-wide scandal. The Shafii Islamic University in Makhachkala protested furiously against the event. The chairman of the State Council, M. Magomedov, and the FSB intervened and the Arafat members were released after a few days.⁶⁸ At present, Arafat has renamed itself Bab-al-abvab (Derbent's Arabic name) and is trying to obtain a licence as an institute of Islamic higher education.

The Arafat incident reveals the possibilities and limits of Said-Afandi–DUMD ambition for religious hegemony over Southern Dagestan. On the one hand, the DUMD is able to use its influence on law enforcement organs to accuse any opposition on any pretext, but on the other, the pluralist constellation of religious forces in Dagestan and Southern Dagestan's quest for autonomy do not allow these possibilities to be fully exploited.

Islamic politics at the community level: Belidzhi and Kullar

The two Lezgin communities analysed here, Belidzhi town (with a population of 16,000) and the neighbouring Kullar village (with a population of 2,200), are located in the southern part of Derbent *raion*. As already mentioned, Lezgins were damaged by Soviet atheist policy more than any other ethnic group⁶⁹ and, therefore, the competition between Salafites, the DUMD and its opponents to influence Lezgins has been fierce.

Coincidentally, the present (since 2001) imam of Belidzhi is the former imam of the 'second Friday mosque' of Derbent, Mavludin Netifov. Even after Netifov was forced to move to Dagestanskii Ogni city and became the imam, his hardship continued. As in Derbent, he was not able to build good relations with Tabasaran parishioners (the largest group in the Ogni population) and was forced to resign after serving as imam for only 11 months. The constant DUMD accusations against Netifov enhanced this process. The representatives of the DUMD even declared in the presence of Netifov's parishioners in the mosque that anybody who had received Islamic education under the Soviet Union was a KGB spy. The problem was that Netifov had had a standard (non-local and non-Sufi) Islamic education at Tashkent Islamic University under the Soviet Union and, after he came back to Dagestan, did not try to join any tariqa brotherhood.⁷⁰ He is very critical of both the DUMD and Siradzhudin. It was unsurprising that the DUMD labelled this anti-Sufi figure as Wahhabi and constantly vilified him.

After resigning as imam of the Dagestanskii Ogni mosque, Netifov lay sick in hospital for three years. Only in 2001 did he eventually find a place where he could live in peace. After the death of the previous imam, Belidzhi's Muslim community began to contact him. Although Netifov is Agul by ethnicity, he speaks Lezgin fluently.⁷¹ On his first Friday visit to Belidzhi he was welcomed by the members of the community.

On the next Friday the Southern representative of the DUMD (Piriev) sent his man with the candidates for imam and religious teacher to the Belidzhi mosque and introduced them to the community. The community answered that they already had a desirable candidate (Netifov) in mind and would accept the DUMD proposal only if Netifov declined to become the imam. On the third Friday Netifov preached before the community, indicating his desire to become the imam. A young DUMD official began to criticise Netifov for his deviation from 'real Islam'. Some elderly people asked the official how long he had been studying Islam. The DUMD official answered 'five years'.⁷² The old people said 'You have no *ada* (morality). Get out of here!'.⁷³

The Islamic revival in Kullar village owes much to the present imam, Mogamedmirza Sefibekov (b. 1964). Sefibekov was unable to fulfil his potential in school and, after finishing intermediate education, often changed jobs.⁷⁴ In 1996, when he was 32 years old, Sefibekov began to study Islam at a madrasah in Dagestanskii Ognii. In 1997 he became acquainted with Piriev, imam of the 'second Friday mosque' of Derbent and the future representative of the DUMD in Southern Dagestan, and shifted to the madrasah attached to this mosque, from which he graduated in 1998. Sefibekov's first task was to reopen the mosque, closed under communism, in Kullar. However, there was another influential figure in Kullar. In November 1997, on the active intervention of the Southern representative of the DUMD (at that time under the oppositionist Siradzhudin's control) the Kullar religious community made a strange decision: it elected Sefibekov as the imam of the soon to be reopened mosque and made the other influential figure the chairman of the religious community, with the job of managing the community's budget.⁷⁵ However, this figure did not contribute to the religious life of the community and eventually emigrated to another village. It is Sefibekov who has regularly officiated at funerals and other rituals in the village, reopened the mosque, and is planning to build a new one and transform the old one into a madrasah, without any assistance from the community treasury controlled by its chairman. Sefibekov has requested that the village assembly of Muslims be convened and elect him as the only imam of the village, but this proposal has been blocked by the chairman.⁷⁶

In this unpleasant situation Sefibekov has been supported by the representative of the DUMD in South Dagestan, Piriev, to whom he feels loyalty. Another remarkable point is that Sefibekov is not a disciple of any sheikh. He gave his nephew elementary Islamic education and sent him to the Saipuliy Kadi Islamic University, where the nephew has become a disciple of Said-Afandi and is already working as a teaching assistant. It is quite possible that when the nephew graduates from the university the DUMD will advise Sefibekov to pass the imam position to him, though everything Islamic in the village was created by Sefibekov.

The cases of Belidzhi and Kullar demonstrate that Muslim communities are the focal point of Islamic politics in Dagestan. In Belidzhi an independent, anti-Sufi figure accused by the DUMD of being a Wahhabi was elected as imam because the community supported him. In Kullar a figure whom the community did not trust much in 1997 gained authority through his sincere activities as imam, and in this process he began to feel loyalty towards the DUMD though the DUMD is not influential in the South.

Remnants of the Salafite movement in Southern Dagestan

Salafites in Belidzhi were under the influence of Ayub Omarov, an Avar and one of the most radical Salafites in Russia, who guided the movement from Astrakhan. In Belidzhi the Salafite propaganda began as early as 1992, when a Slavic Muslim, born in 1974, received permission from the administration to organise a religious club in his apartment. The popularity of his club rose rapidly and by the mid-1990s almost 40–50 believers, mainly young people, often unemployed, gathered in their prayer house (they refused to pray at the mosque). They began to criticise and even physically attacked local customary practices, such as funerals and weddings. When the chief of police of the Belidzhi precinct visited Chechnya in 1995, he was frightened to find that Chechen activists knew the situation in Belidzhi very well. This made the law enforcement organs in Belidzhi begin to prosecute ‘Wahhabis’ earlier than in other territories of Dagestan. In 1998, exploiting a dubious incident in which someone fired a machine gun late in the evening, the militia searched the club and confiscated ‘Wahhabi’ literature. The military conflict in 1999 intensified the repression. The meetings of Salafites were prohibited and ‘prophylactic measures’ were introduced. Thus, the police at least succeeded in dissolving the Salafite community, if not converting them. Most active Salafites left Belidzhi for Astrakhan.⁷⁷

Nizam Razakhanov (b. 1970), the leader of the Salafite movement in Southern Dagestan during 1996–98, forsook the movement in 1998, long before the military conflict. The Salafite club recruited him in 1995. After nine months of training in Astrakhan he became the leader. However, he and other activists from Southern Dagestan began to question Omarov’s theology, consciously aimed at provoking discord within families and local communities. In addition, Razakhanov suffered from poverty since his comrades interpreted any attempt to earn normally as illegitimate materialism. Razakhanov began to feel that he was not serving Allah, but just acting out of fear of what those around him might think. In Astrakhan, Razakhanov and about ten activists from Southern Dagestan announced their resignation from the movement, criticising Omarov. Omarov and his disciples ganged up on them completely.⁷⁸

The rise and fall of Salafism in Southern Dagestan during the 1990s testifies that it was a movement run by marginalised youth but, at the same time, it has not been eliminated by coercive measures. The traditional, custom law-oriented interpretation of Islam continues to frustrate a certain stratum of youth. On the other hand, the ‘battle with Wahhabism’ continues to be a convenient pretext for the DUMD to accuse any independent religious force in Dagestan.

The renewed attempt to create an alternative DUMD in 2004

The completion of the DUMD monopoly of tourist services for pilgrims to Mecca in 2003 deprived a private tourist company in Bashkortostan which had served pilgrims, exploiting its direct connection with the Russian Central Spiritual Board under mufti T. Tadzhtudin, of the right to provide visas for Saudi Arabia. Because of this monopoly, about 1,500 applicants, among whom were old people who had managed to save money to fulfil one of the most sacred obligations of Muslims, were not able to

go to Mecca. This scandal was broadcast on TV almost every day and stirred up lay believers, who had been indifferent to the religious rivalry between various tariqa brotherhoods and ethnicities. Exploiting this public discontent and after careful lobbying with the federal authorities, on 17 March 2004 the oppositionist religious leaders I. Il'yasov, M. Karachayev (rector of the Shafi Islam University), M. Gadzhiev (vice-rector of the same university), I. Agaragimov (dean of the same university), A. Gadzhimarguchev (leader of the Dargin opposition) and Magomed-Said Abakarov (leader of the intra-Avar opposition to Said-Afandi) gathered in one of the mosques in Makhachkala. They requested the creation of a new spiritual board and elected from themselves an organisational committee for this purpose.⁷⁹

The opposition attempted to convince the Russian federal authorities that the prohibition of alternative spiritual boards in Dagestan was a violation of federal law, with the expectation that President Putin, re-elected overwhelmingly in 2004, would 'harmonise' the Dagestan law with the federal norms and, as a result, alternative spiritual boards would emerge again. The opposition assumed that the monopoly of resources held by Said-Afandi's DUMD must be broken before the real, legitimate DUMD was created.⁸⁰

The convention of Muslims was scheduled to be held on 18 April. On 15 April the DUMD convened a broadened session of the Council of Ulama as a counterattack to the opposition. Remarkably, at this session secular leaders, such as a secretary of the republican Council of Security, the republican minister of nationalities, vice-minister of internal affairs and chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs (A. Magomedov) criticised the attempt by the opposition to create alternative spiritual boards 'according to national criteria'.⁸¹ The opposition justified themselves by saying that they were trying to create a social organisation named Spiritual Centre to eventually convene the Congress of Muslims in Dagestan to reform the DUMD.

On 18 April more than 500 aggressive supporters of Said-Afandi (most of them were students of the Islamic universities under his influence) surrounded the site of the convention, often with weapons in their hands, and did not allow it to start working. A. Magomedov, the chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs, proposed that both sides should sit at the table for negotiation. The opposition compromised and accepted the inclusion of its representatives in the Council of Ulama and the DUMD department in charge of pilgrimage to Mecca. Thus the secular authorities of Dagestan demonstrated that they could play a pivotal role in the stalemates created by the parity of influence between the DUMD and the opposition. During the spring and summer of 2004 the DUMD and the Dagestan government were in serious confrontation over the issue whether to transfer the tourist service for pilgrimage from the DUMD to the government. The authorities of the Southern Federal District of Russia supported the Dagestan government. The latent background of this conflict was the approaching presidential election in the republic, scheduled in 2006. The Dargin elites controlling the secular authorities gave a warning to the Avar elites that they were able to damage the religious monopoly of Avars if Avars began to seek more than the religious monopoly. A mass protest against M. Magomedov in Khasavyurt on 29 July abruptly changed this situation. The secular authorities began to seek the possibility to ally with the DUMD and Avar elites again.

Conclusion

Religious features of Dagestani Islam, such as Sufi tradition, the predominance of the Shafii school of law and the key role played by territorial communities (*jamaats*) in religious life, have determined the Islamic politics in the republic. As a result, Islamic politics in Dagestan have been ruled by two, mutually contradictory, motives. One is the attempt to renew the traditional state-sanctioned Islam, reinforced by an ecclesiastical hierarchy and a professional clergy. The other is religious communities' desire to nominate and control their imams by themselves, as far as the communities pay them salaries. It is difficult to find a similar interaction between state Islamism and self-governing communities in other post-Soviet Muslim territories, where the 'revival of Islam' is an artificial construction initiated from above.

A key factor in Said-Afandi's struggle for the religious monopoly was the 'statification' of Islam. In the Dagestan context this meant a coalition between the two strongest ethnic elites: Avar and Dargin. The nationalistic (pro-Avar) tendency of the DUMD would become more manifest if compared with the Dagestani secular authorities under the Dargins' hegemony, which preserved and even developed the Soviet tradition of ethnic quota and rotation in the distribution of the electoral and government posts.⁸² Comparison of the maps in Figures 1 and 2 reveals that, having monopolised the official religious authorities for more than ten years, Said-Afandi's DUMD has not been able to expand its influence significantly beyond the ethnic borders of Avars, Dargins and Nogais. However, Figure 2 should not be interpreted categorically. As demonstrated by the case studies included in this article, the DUMD is able to penetrate the communities of oppositional *raiony*, while the opposition also is able to do so.

Even if the pro-Avar DUMD inclined to preserve the ethnic monopoly of religious authorities, rather than power sharing with other ethnicities, Islamic politics in Dagestan have developed within certain limits of interethnic balance. First, the DUMD has built channels to influence Lezgins and Nogais. This should not be underestimated since the Lezgins live in the 'autonomous' South, while Nogais practise the Hafani school (the minority in Dagestan). Second, the DUMD differentiates its policies towards the uncompromising Kumyk opposition and the more compromising and accessible Southern Dagestan. Third, the DUMD has maintained more or less cooperative relations with the secular authorities under the hegemony of the Dargin elites, renowned for their opportunist, bonapartist behaviour. Thus, Islamic politics in Dagestan largely reveal a typical picture of 'the stability of instability',⁸³ which seems to be an optimal form of interethnic peace in the North Caucasus.

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Notes

- 1 The Salafites in Dagestan established a 'sharia (divine law) zone', covering Karamakhi and other ethnically Dargin villages in May 1998, which existed until the military conflict in September 1999.
- 2 This article is one of the outcomes of the research project 'Islam and Politics in Russia: A Multi-Layered and Comparative Approach' (2003–06) and the 21st Century COE Programme 'Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: Meso-Areas and Globalisation' (2003–08) financed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Sciences and Technology.
- 3 E.F. Kisriev, *Islam i vlast' v Dagestane* (Moscow, 2004), Ch. 6. See also Dmitry Makarov, 'Dagestan's Approach to the Islamic Mega-Area? The Potentials and Limits of Jihadism', in Kimitaka Matsuzato (ed), *Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries: Histories Revived or Improvised?* (Sapporo, 2005) pp. 195–220. Besides Chechnya, Dagestan neighbours Azerbaijan and Georgia. Moreover, this region is Russia's exit to the Caspian Sea, the strategic and economic importance of which skyrocketed through the projects for the trans-Caspian transport of oil and natural gas.
- 4 One of the four schools of law of Sunni, established by Idris al-Shafii in the eighth–ninth century. This school was very influential under the protection of the Seljug Turks and one of the most important Sunnite jurists and the establisher of Sufism, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) was from this school. Later, the Shafii school declined, mainly for political reasons, and today this school continues to be dominant only in the peripheries of the Muslim world, such as Eastern Africa, Southeast Asia and Dagestan.
- 5 Magomed-Mukhtar Babatov, a theological leader of the Kumyk opposition, and Mavludin Netifov, imam of the Belidzhi mosque, interviewed by the authors in Kakhilai town, Makhachkala (23 February 2004) and Belidzhi town, Derbent *raion* (26 February 2004) respectively. Shamil' Shikhaliev, a former expert of the Dagestan Government Committee on Religious Affairs, interviewed by M.-R. Ibragimov in Makhachkala (31 December 2004). The importance of the religious territorial communities for the Shafii school is testified by the fact that in Dagestani religious statistics Friday mosques are categorically distinguished from 'quarter mosques', while the similar statistics in the Volga–Ural region only boast of the total number of mosques without this distinction. As is well known, the Dagestani religious authorities try to build gigantic Friday mosques in populous cities so that the Muslims of the city should actually be able to gather on each Friday, while, for example, the Friday mosque (*Lya-lya Tiuripan*) of Ufa City with a million population does not respond to this request at all despite its post-modernist, luxury architecture.
- 6 In spite of the endeavour of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan to extend its influence even forcibly, there have been very few examples of a split of Sunnite Muslims at the community level (in other words, of construction of a 'second' Friday mosque) in Dagestan: those took place in Derbent City (analysed in this article) and a few other villages in Southern Dagestan.
- 7 This article shares much with Dmitry Makarov's excellent study of Islamic politics in Dagestan, but his perspective does not go below the level of the republic (D.V. Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi i neofitsial'nyi Islam v Dagestane* (Moscow, Institut vostokovedeniya RAN, 2000)). See also Dmitrii Makarov & Rafik Mukhametshin, 'Official and unofficial Islam', in Hilary Pilkington & Galina Yemelianova (eds), *Islam in Post-Soviet Russia: Public and Private Faces* (London and New York, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 117–163.
- 8 An Islamic reformist movement trying to return to 'pure Islam' practised by the first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet Muhammad (al-Salaf), eliminating the deviations (*bid'a*) added in the later period. In the modern Muslim world, this movement was founded by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab from the Hanbali school of law in the eighteenth century. Therefore, this movement is often called 'Wahhabism', with pejorative nuances.
- 9 On the dangers of secularising Muslim political systems according to the European model of secular states see V.O. Kushnirenko, 'Reformvannaya shariata yak osnova modernizatsii islams'koï derzhavy v konteksti teorii konstitutsionalizmu. Avtoreferat dysertatsii ... kandydata politychnykh nauk', Kyïv, 2004.
- 10 Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi i neofitsial'nyi Islam* ... , pp. 121–123.
- 11 On the functions of the spiritual board during the early period see D.D. Azamatov, 'Orenburgskoe magometanskoe dukhovnoe sobranie v obshchestvennoi i dukhovnoi zhizni musul'manskogo naseleniya Yuzhnogo Urala v kontse XVIII–XIX vv. Dissertatsiya ... kandidata istoricheskikh nauk', Ufa, 1994.
- 12 Both approaches, divisions according to state boundaries and pluralisation, facilitated the increase in the number of spiritual boards. There were only four spiritual boards in the Soviet Union, and now '43 spiritual boards of Muslims' are operating in Russia alone (Kaflan M. Khanbabaev,

- deputy chairman of the Dagestan Government Committee on Religious Affairs, interviewed by Matsuzato in Makhachkala, 18 February 2004).
- 13 For these research purposes the present authors found no alternative but to rely upon a large number of interviews with religious and secular leaders. In contrast to the struggle between traditional Islam (Sufi) and the Salafites during the 1990s, which was accompanied by public debates and produced a massive number of publications, the clientelist struggle between Sufi brotherhoods, in particular their intrigues at the community level, have barely been expressed in the press or broadcasting media. The authors conducted fieldwork in three cities (Makhachkala, Derbent and Buinaksk) and three *raiony* (Untsukul'sk, Tabasaran and Derbent) in Dagestan. The list of sources of this article includes interviews, sometimes repeated ones, with six sheikhs (in Dagestan there are, presumably, 16 sheikhs), five imams, an assistant mufti of Dagestan, a Shiah leader (the chairman of the Derbent Friday Mosque), two former and present Salafites, six officials of the secular authorities at the republican and municipal levels, and two police officers. Of course, many more religious and secular leaders were interviewed to prepare this article. The same questions were addressed to several respondents to compensate for the absence of printed sources.
 - 14 *Islam: entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 224–225. In this article Sufism, tariqism and muridism are used as interchangeable terms. On the history and the present situation of Sufism in Northeastern Caucasus see Aleksei Malashenko, *Islamskie orientiry Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow, Moskovskii tsentr Karnegi, 2001); *Gosudarstvo i religiya v Dagestane: Informatsionno-analiticheskii byulleten'*, No. 1 (4), Makhachkala, 2003.
 - 15 Specialists in Caucasian Islam, such as Dmitrii Makarov, Aleksei Malashenko and Galina Yemelianova, rely upon the term 'wird' to convey the meaning of these coherent collectives – brotherhoods (for examples see Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi i neofitsial'nyi Islam...*, p. 7; Galina M. Yemelianova, 'Sufism and Politics in the North Caucasus', *Nationalities Papers*, 29, 4, 2001, p. 664). The original meaning of wird was 'mythic prayer given by sheikhs to their disciples' (wird-method) but it began to imply coherent brotherhoods (wird-orders). This phenomenon is remarkable since it repeats the ancient metamorphosis of the concept of tariqa.
 - 16 It was because of this early conversion that only Dagestan and Chechnya follow the Shafii school in the former USSR territories. This fact is a source of pride for the Dagestani Muslims since it testifies that the other Muslim peoples in the former Soviet Union became acquainted with Islam through the Golden Horde or the Ottoman Empire (both sponsored Hanafi), while Dagestani peoples accepted it almost directly from the Prophet Muhammad.
 - 17 A.P. Shikhsaidov, 'Islam i stanovlenie dagestanskoi istoricheskoi traditsii', *Islam i islamskaya kul'tura v Dagestane* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 35, 38.
 - 18 Makarov & Mukhametshin, 'Official and Unofficial Islam', p. 148.
 - 19 Data provided by the Dagestan Government Committee on Religious Affairs.
 - 20 *Religii i religioznye organizatsii v Dagestane* (2001), pp. 72–73.
 - 21 Il'ias-khadzhi Il'iasov, interviewed by the authors in Makhachkala on 21 August 2003. In addition, Il'ias-khadzhi explained the strength of Islam in Dagestan by the passionate mentality of the Dagestani people and the predominance of the Shafii school of law.
 - 22 *Dagestanskaya pravda*, 5 September 2001, p. 1.
 - 23 Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi...* p. 7; Makarov & Mukhametshin, 'Official and Unofficial Islam', pp. 134–135.
 - 24 However, as Makarov remarks, this popular association between national dignity and Sufism is quite problematic. Although he had grown up in the muridist tradition, Shamil' tried to build a sharia state and, accordingly, was critical of the 'ada (local customary law) characteristics of Sufism (Malashenko, *Islamskie orientiry...*, pp. 28–29). However paradoxical it was, what consolidated muridism-tariqism in the Northern Caucasus was the tsarist government's de-Shamilisation policy, which promoted 'ada as a counterbalance against sharia.
 - 25 A.I. Osmanov, A.S. Gadzhiev & G.A. Iskenderov, *Iz istorii pereselencheskogo dvizheniya i resheniya agrarnogo voprosa v Dagestane* (Makhachkala, 1994), p. 26. On the ethno-demographic situation in Dagestan see Magomed-Rasul A. Ibragimov, 'Naselenie (etnodemograficheskii obzor)', in S.A. Arutyunov *et al.*, *Narody Dagestana* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 36–49; Enver Kisriev, *Respublika Dagestan: Model' etnologicheskogo monitoringa* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 19–23.
 - 26 According to the 1989 census, the number of those who received higher education among 1,000 persons of the nationality was 168 among Mountain Jews, 134 among Laks, 124 among Russians, 92 among *Lezgins*, 84 among Aguls, 82 among Kumyks, 72 among Azerbaijanis, 67 among Tabasarans, 66 among Avars and 64 among Dargins. Among Dagestani ethnicities Chechens are least educated, producing only 36 persons with higher education among 1,000 (*Sotsial'no-demograficheskaya kharakteristika naibolee mnogochislennykh natsional'nostei Dagestana po itogam perepisi naseleniya 1989 g.* (Makhachkala, 1992), pp. 70–78.

- 27 This is exemplified by the affirmative action policy directed at Lezgin youth in entrance examinations for the North Caucasian Islamic University, which belongs to the DUMD. The same policy is pursued by the Imam *Shaji* Islamic University (which belongs to the Kumyk opposition) in Makhachkala.
- 28 'Tabasaran *raion* is one of the largest *raiony* in the Republic of Dagestan with a population of 56,000 ... More than half of the population is composed of children, school pupils and youth. 25,000 are of working age, among whom only 14.2% are employed in the spheres with social significance and individual labour. The annual natural increase of the population amounts to 950–1,050 persons. This is the largest number not only in Dagestan but also in the Russian Federation'. ('Tabasarantsy: Istoriya, Ekonomika, Kul'tura, Nauka, Traditsii', *Vozrozhdenie*, 2002, 9, p. 11).
- 29 The flattery of this committee toward 'Wahhabis' generated serious tensions between the Dagestan government and the DUMD in 1998–99 (Makarov & Mukhametshin, pp. 145–149). The committee chairman, A. Magomedov, justifies his behaviour during this critical period by his consideration that 'someone needed to contact them, so as not to make them uncontrollable (interview with the authors, Makhachkala, 20 August 2003).
- 30 As a result of this activity, more than 900 personal names were recorded as having left for abroad to study Islam since 1996 (data provided by the Dagestan Government Committee on Religious Affairs in December 2004).
- 31 *Dagestanskaya pravda*, 16 June 2001, p. 2.
- 32 Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sokrovishchnitsa blagodatnykh znanii*, 2nd edn (Moscow, 2002), pp. 4–6.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
- 34 A Kumykised Dargin sheikh who influenced the future Kumyk opposition greatly and died in 1999.
- 35 Murtazali-khadzhi Karachaev, rector of the Imam Shafii Islamic University, interviewed by the authors in Makhachkala, 23 February 2004; Magomed-Gadzhi Gadzhiev, vice-rector of the same university and son of Mukhammad-Amin, interviewed by the authors in Makhachkala city, 25 February 2004.
- 36 Arslanali Gamzatov, chairman of the Council of Ulama of Dagestan, rector of the Saipully Kadi Islamic University, interviewed by the authors in Buinaksk city, 23 February 2004.
- 37 In fact, our fieldwork confirmed Dmitrii Makarov's observation that Said-Afandi's disciples share a specific mentality which leads them to call all sheikhs, but their own, *mutasheikhy* (false sheikhs) (Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi* ..., p. 11; see also Yemelianova, 'Sufism and Politics ...', p. 669), even without reading any writings or listening to any sermons of these 'false sheikhs'. Responding to a question on what prevented the unification of Muslims in Dagestan, Said-Afandi answered explicitly: 'ignorance and misunderstanding of Islam' which led to people 'committing the most negative deeds' (Said-Afandi, *Sokrovishchnitsa* ..., p. 72).
- 38 Yemelianova, 'Sufism and Politics ...', p. 670.
- 39 Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi* ..., pp. 9–10; Makarov & Mukhametshin, 'Official and Unofficial Islam', pp. 136–137; Kisriev, *Respublika Dagestan*, pp. 98–99.
- 40 Galina Yemelianova, 'Islam and Power', in Pilkington & Yemelianova (eds), *Islam in Post Soviet Russia*, p. 97, A.-G. Abdullaev, 'K istorii KDUMD', *Kumykskoe nauchno-kul'turnoe obshchestvo—Vesti*, 2000, Vyp. 4, p. 56.
- 41 Murtazali Murtazaliev, managing officer of the North Caucasus Islamic University, interviewed by the authors in Makhachkala, 21 August 2003 and 25 February 2004.
- 42 Murtazaliev, 25 February 2004.
- 43 He is the second eldest among the Karachaev brothers, renowned in the Dagestani political and semi-legal worlds.
- 44 *Makhachkalinskii izvestiya*, 7 August 1998, p. 7; Islamudin Agaragimov, dean of the Imam Shafii Islamic University and the imam of Talki town (part of Makhachkala), interviewed by the authors in Makhachkala, 21 August 2003.
- 45 Ethnographically there are six Kumyk *raiony*, among which four (Karabudakhkent, Kumtorkalinsk, Kayakentsk and Babayurtovsk) are completely and another one (Khasavyurt) partially independent from the DUMD (Il'yas-khadzhi Il'yasov, interviewed by M.-R. Ibragimov, 6 April 2004). The only Kumyk *raion* which recognises the DUMD's leadership is Buinaksk and this is attributed to the influence of Arslanali Gamzatov, the chairman of the Council of Ulama of Dagestan.
- 46 Murtazali Yakubov, leading specialist of the Dagestan Government Committee on Religious Affairs, interviewed by the authors of Makhachkala, 18 February 2004.
- 47 D. Dzhambulaev, 'U naroda est' ideologiya', *Dagestanskaya pravda*, 27 October 2000, p. 1; Magomednabi A. Ibragimov, teacher, director of the Museum of Imams of Gimry Village, interviewed by the authors in Gimry village, Untsukul'sk *raion*, 23 August 2003.

- 48 Ramazan-khadzhi Gazimagomedov, chairman of the Untsukul'sk *raion* council of ulama and imams, interviewed by the authors in Kakhabroso village, Untsukul'sk *raion*, 23 August 2003.
- 49 Similar measures to 'put drunks to shame' were adopted in other *raiony*, for example, Charodinsk, an Avar *raion* (*Dagestanskaya Pravda*, 3 November 2000, p. 5). In 1998 there was even an attempt to organise a Sharia vigilante corps (*sharyatskaya družina*) jointly from Salafites and Tariqaist to struggle against narcotics, drinking and crime in Kizilyurt *raion* (Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyi* . . . , p. 37).
- 50 Gazimagomed Kamilov, director of the Gimry village house of culture, interviewed by the authors while driving, 23 August 2003.
- 51 Authors' interview with Gazimagomedov, 23 August 2003.
- 52 Derbent was called Bab al-abvab (the Gate of the Gates) in Arabic and Temir-kapy (the Iron Gate) in Turkic; see N.K. Kasumov, *Gorod, perezivshii veka, Derbentu – 5000 let* (Makhachkala, 2003), pp. 8–9. The name Derbent derived from the Iranian word 'darband' meaning 'bolt'.
- 53 Said-Gashcham S. Mirtaibov, chairman of the Council of the Derbent Friday Mosque, interviewed by the authors, 20 February 2004, Derbent city.
- 54 The authors of this article thought it impolite to ask Siradzhudin and his disciples whether this rumour was true. However, a reliable source testifies that Siradzhudin does not deny the rumour, answering that he does not request it but his disciples do it voluntarily.
- 55 Gusein-Bala Ya. Guseinov, head of the Department of Culture, Publishing and Religion at Derbent City Hall, interviewed by Matsuzato, 24 February 2004.
- 56 Siradzhudin Israfilov Khuriksky, interviewed by the authors in Khurik village, Tabasaran *raion*, 21 February 2004; Gamzatov, 23 February 2004.
- 57 This is at least partially true since we witnessed such visits when we visited his house on the Islamic New Year's Day, 21 February 2004.
- 58 Authors' interview with Guseinov, 25 August 2003.
- 59 Matsuzato's interview with Guseinov, 24 February 2004; authors' interview with Mirtaibov, 20 February 2004, Netifov, 26 February 2004.
- 60 Piriev's group justifies the split of Muslims in Derbent by the fact that the 'first' Friday Mosque is located at a high place on the hill and therefore it is difficult for elderly parishioners to climb up to it each Friday (Makhmud-khadzhi Piriev, imam of the 'second Friday mosque' of Derbent City, interviewed by the authors in Derbent city, 20 February 2004). As argued in the introduction to this article, this justification is unacceptable from the Shafii point of view, though this pretext is used widely in cases of politically motivated splits in the Hanafi territories such as Bashkortostan.
- 61 At present, 200–300 Muslims participate in Friday prayers, although this number is much smaller than that of the real Friday Mosque.
- 62 The authors, unsurprisingly, became a target of their agitation. They repeated the same criticism that the Salafites addressed to Sufism during the 1990s. They never identify themselves as Salafites, presenting themselves only as 'real Muslims' (talk with A.A. Guseinov, merchant, and other 'lay Muslims', 20 February 2004, Derbent city).
- 63 Authors' interview with Mirtaibov, 20 February 2004.
- 64 *MK v Dagestane*, 9–16 December 2004, p. 5; Murad Osmanov, an assistant of the mufti of Dagestan, interviewed by M.-R. Ibragimov in Makhachkala, 20 December 2004.
- 65 Authors' interviews with Isamutdin Saidov, imam of the Bab al-abvab mosque (the former Arafat), Derbent city, 19 and 20 February 2004; Siradzhudin Israfilov, 21 February 2004; Guseinov, 24 February 2004.
- 66 With an interruption for service in the Soviet Army in Afghanistan (1984–87), Isamutdin Saidov studied at the Rybinsk Aviation Institute and the Perm Polytechnic Institute. Inspired by his own mythical experience in Afghanistan, during his studies in Perm Saidov resumed the practice of prayer which he had learnt from his grandfather in childhood and began to study Arabic independently. In 1990 he returned to his native village in Tabasaran *raion*, became Siradzhudin's disciple, and began to teach children Islam in his village. During this period (1990–95) Saidov completed a correspondence course offered by the Baku Pedagogical Institute. Having only intermediate secular education himself, Sheikh Siradzhudin appreciated and favoured his highly educated young disciple. In 1995 Saidov was invited by the Khochni Muslim community to teach Islam. To secure his income, the community gave him a job as teacher of Azerbaijani in a secular school. In 2000 the Arafat religious community asked Siradzhudin to send Saidov as their imam.
- 67 Israfilov, 21 February 2004; Saidov, 19 and 20 February 2004; authors' talk with the teachers, students and parents of the Islam Institute Bab al-abvab, 25 August 2003.
- 68 *Derbentskie novosti*, 19 October 2001, pp. 1–2; Saidov, 19 February 2004; Agaragimov, interviewed by the authors in Talki town, 26 August 2003.
- 69 In the two communities analysed here the mosques are open only on Fridays. This is inconceivable in Mountain and Central Dagestan.

- 70 Authors' interview with Netifov, 26 February 2004.
- 71 Permagomed M. Magomedov, managing officer of the Belidzhi town administration, interviewed by the authors in Belidzhi town, Derbent *raion*, 26 February 2004.
- 72 Netifov commented that this man had actually studied Islam for only three years at Saipully Kadi (Said-Afandi's) University.
- 73 Authors' interview with Netifov, 26 February 2004.
- 74 Byba M. Mamedov, Kullar village chief, the former teacher of the village school, interviewed by the authors in Kullar village, Derbent *raion*, 26 February 2004.
- 75 Minutes of the assembly of the Jamaat of Kullar village, 27 November 1997.
- 76 Mogamedmirza G. Sefibekov, imam of Kullar village, interviewed by the authors in Kullar village, Derbent *raion*, 26 February 2004.
- 77 Seid B. Agaev, chief of police, and Ramaldan M. Egibekov, major in the police in Belidzhi precinct, interviewed by the authors in Belidzhi town, Derbent *raion*, 26 February 2004.
- 78 Nizam Razakhanov, merchant, interviewed by the authors in Belidzhi town, Derbent *raion*, 26 February 2004.
- 79 *Islamskii vestnik*, 1 April 2004, pp. 1–4.
- 80 Il'ias-khadzhi Il'iasov, interviewed by Matsuzato in Makhachkala, 25 February 2004.
- 81 *Islamskii vestnik*, 29 April 2004.
- 82 Robert Bruce Ware & Enver Kisriev, 'Political Stability and Ethnic Parity: Why Is There Peace in Dagestan?', in Mikhail A. Alexseev (ed), *Center–Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia: A Federation Imperiled* (Basingstoke and London, Macmillan, 1999), pp. 95–130.
- 83 This concept was proposed by Edward W. Walker, 'Russia's Soft Underbelly: The Stability in Dagestan', Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, Winter 1999–2000.